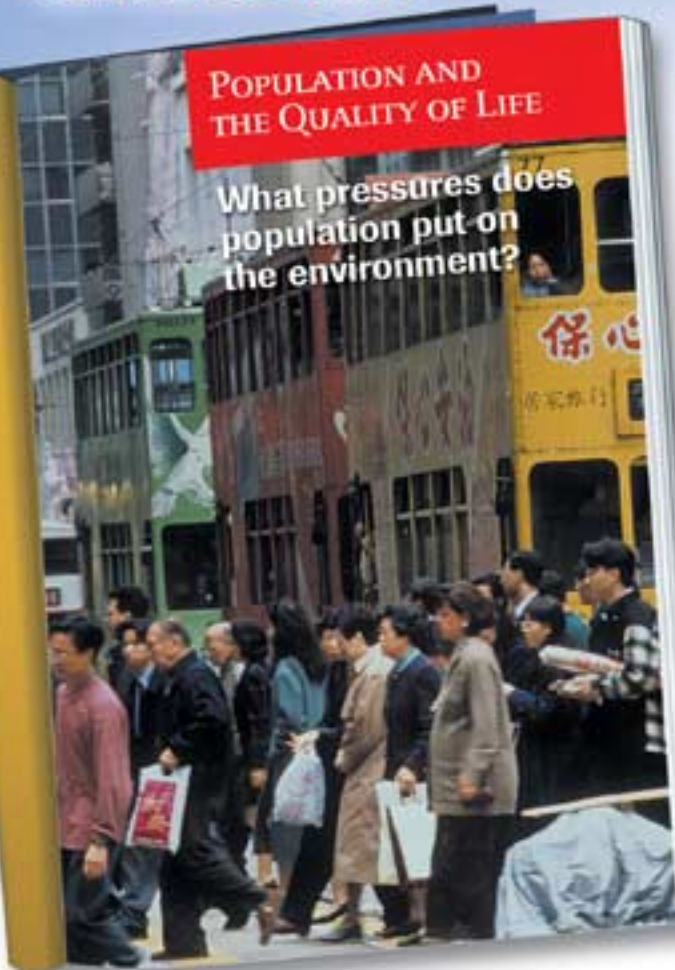


CASE STUDY

POPULATION AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE

What pressures does population put on the environment?



Trams, buses, and people crowd the streets of Hong Kong.



The Voyageur Experience
in World Geography

China: Food for a Billion Plus

Because East Asia has changed so much, it's hard to imagine how different the region looked 50 years ago. Today, some of the countries and cities of the region are among the most prosperous in the world. In Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, the statistics on per capita income, length of life, and literacy are all high. Despite recent problems, the economies are generally prosperous, as can be seen in the glittering shopping districts and luxurious residential neighborhoods of Tokyo, Seoul, and Taipei. But it wasn't always that way. If the big problem of the past was industrializing, today it is managing population.

Patterns of Population

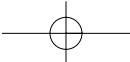
Many of the countries of East Asia have been so successful in dealing with the basic problems of feeding their people and industrializing that they now face other problems. Several of these problems are caused by the expanding populations in the region.

THE SITUATION AT MID-CENTURY At the middle of the 20th century, the nations of East Asia ranked among the least developed in the world. In fact, statistics on health, literacy, fertility, and economics in East Asia mirrored those of the poorest region of the world—sub-Saharan Africa. Widespread poverty was the norm. Life expectancy was short. Fertility rates were high, as were infant and maternal death rates. In 1950, East Asian women often married young and gave birth to six children on average during their lifetimes. Most economies remained rural.

Addressing Population Problems

Policy makers in the region understood that population control was key to solving a wide range of social and economic woes. Among the successful programs were those that stressed education and family planning.

ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS Unrestricted population growth put tremendous strain on the quality of life in the region and on the environment. Food production on existing farmland was barely adequate. The absence of basic sanitation fouled the region's water supplies. In some countries, such as China, the water tables were drained to dangerously low levels. Fortunately, the governments of East Asia recognized this catastrophe-in-the-making. They moved quickly to reverse course.



PROBLEMS AND POLICIES Aggressive family planning programs were begun in the region. Birth rates began leveling off and then dropping. By the year 2000, women were marrying much later and giving birth to an average of 2.5 children. In China alone, the birth rate dropped from 6.22 children per woman in 1950–1955 to just 1.82 in the year 2000.

IMPRESSIVE RESULTS This drop in birth rates, combined with industrialization, led to fast economic growth. By the 1990s, the economies of East Asia were booming, transforming social and economic conditions. In just over a generation, the region’s quality of life has improved to the point where life expectancy and literacy rates are among the highest in the world.

The Quality of Life

Although these changes in East Asia have been dramatic, they have not solved all of the region’s problems. Some countries in the region, such as China and Japan, are among the most populous in the world. Furthermore, life expectancy in East Asia has increased from 41 years in the period 1950–1955 to 69 years in the year 2000.

SOME ONGOING PROBLEMS The huge populations of the region continue to put pressure on the environment. Even if China were to maintain a modest growth rate of one percent a year, it would still add 13 million people to its population annually.

The growing populations are concentrated in the cities of the region, where they must be provided with housing, sanitation, and transportation. Pollution, overcrowding, and flooding are all problems that are made worse by an expanding population.

However, not all family planning programs were well received. Some citizens criticized China’s one-child-per-family policy as harsh and an assault on their rights. In the face of such criticism, the region’s family planning efforts were expanded.

Despite these difficulties, East Asia has shown the world that rapid social and economic progress are possible. This requires that people and their leaders join hands with the world community to make difficult decisions and put in place sound policies.

A case study project on population follows on the next two pages.

Population

Some Major Cities of East Asia, 1995–1999

City	Population (in millions)
Shanghai, China	13.58
Beijing, China	11.30
Seoul, South Korea	10.29
Tianjin, China	9.42
Tokyo, Japan	7.85
Hong Kong, China	6.84
Shenyang, China	5.12
Guangzhou, China	4.49
Wuhan, China	4.25
Pusan, South Korea	3.87
Chongqing, China	3.47
Xian, China	2.97
Nanjing, China	2.96
Taipei, Taiwan	2.60
Osaka, Japan	2.48

SOURCE: The Statesman’s Yearbook (2001)

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts

- 1 HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION What are the two largest cities in South Korea?
- 2 REGION Which country on the chart has most of the largest cities?

SEE PRIMARY SOURCE A

SEE PRIMARY SOURCE D

CASE STUDY

PROJECT

Primary sources A, B, C, D, and E offer assessments of East Asia's population challenges. Use these resources along with your own research to prepare maps, graphs, and charts that tell a story about population and quality of life in one nation of East Asia.



RESEARCH LINKS
CLASSZONE.COM

A Visual Presentation

Suggested Steps

1. Choose one East Asian nation to study. Search for information that can be presented visually in charts and graphs. The visuals you create should explain some aspect of the nation's population and quality of life.
2. Use online and print resources to research your topic.
3. Look for information that shows relationships between population and quality of life. For example, one chart might illustrate declining birth rates while another shows rising literacy rates.

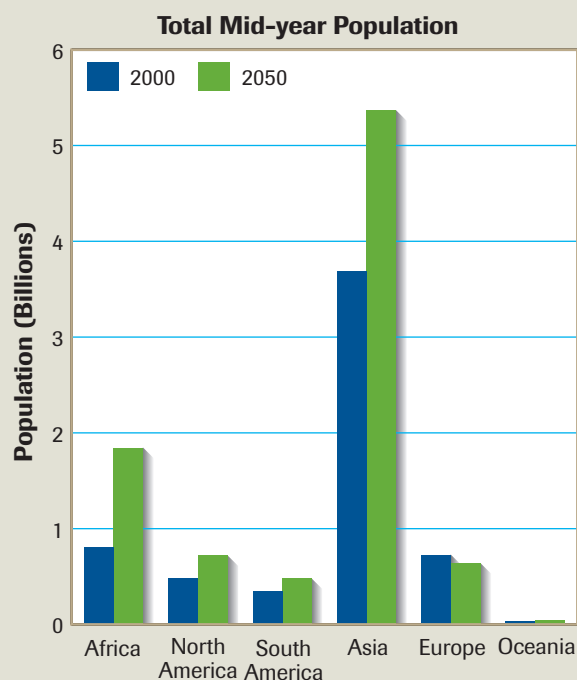
4. Include several different types of visuals: pie graphs, line and bar graphs, pictograms, population distribution maps, and so on.
5. Try to make your visuals as colorful as possible. Use color to make the information easier to understand.
6. Prepare a brief oral explanation of your visuals and the story they tell.

Materials and Supplies

- posterboard
- color markers
- computer with Internet access
- books, newspapers, and magazines
- printer

PRIMARY SOURCE A

Bar Graph This bar graph, prepared from U.S. Census Bureau statistics, shows where and by how much population is expected to grow from 2000 to 2050.



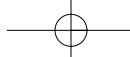
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, International Data Base.

PRIMARY SOURCE B

Policy Statement On a trip to Hong Kong in 1998, U.S. President Bill Clinton discussed the issue of pollution in China. He noted that overcrowding and industrialization had led to serious environmental problems that would only get worse if not addressed. The following CNN news story quotes some of Clinton's remarks.

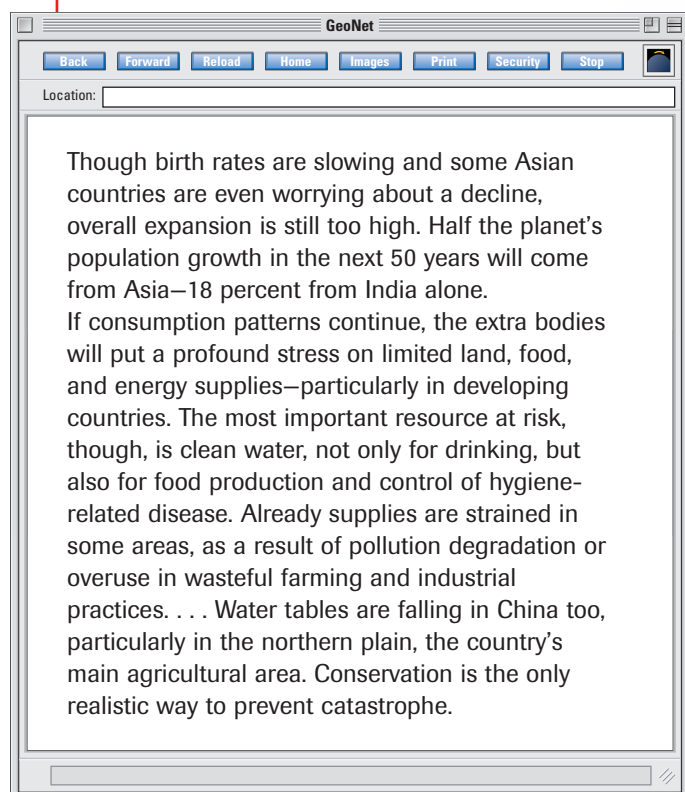
Clinton addressed a contentious [controversial] issue separating the two countries—global warming. He also announced a series of clean air and water measures to help China, which has five of the most polluted cities in the world, according to environmentalists. . . .

"You know better than I that polluted air and water are threatening your remarkable progress," Clinton said. "Smog has caused entire Chinese cities to disappear from satellite photographs, and respiratory illness is China's number one health problem."



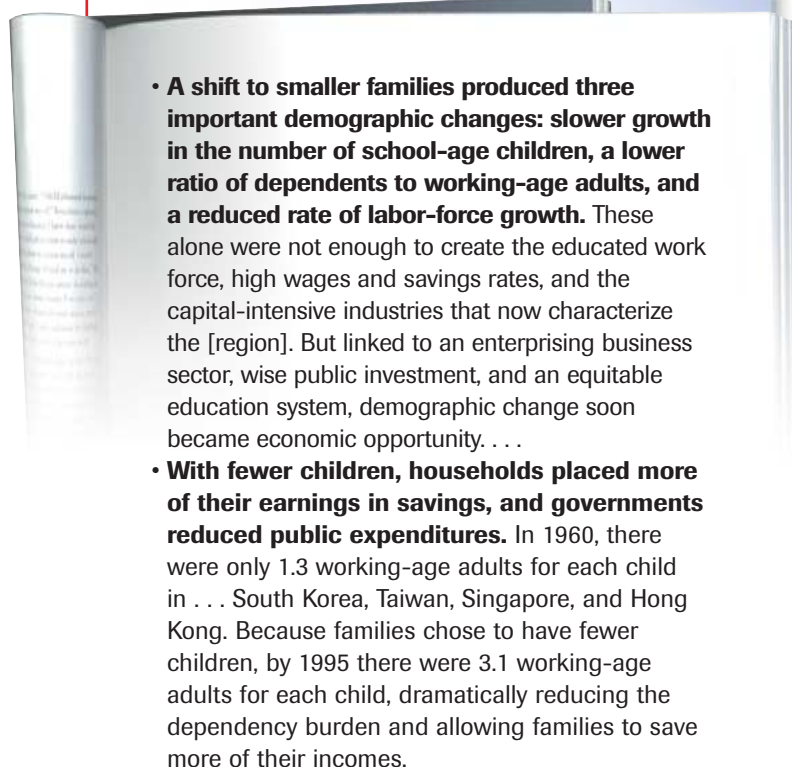
PRIMARY SOURCE C

News Analysis In this article from Asiaweek.com, the author addresses an interesting problem posed by population growth in Asia.



PRIMARY SOURCE D

Fact Sheet In 1997, Population Action International produced a fact sheet that helped explain the relationship between population control and development in East Asia.



PRIMARY SOURCE E

Political Cartoon This cartoon was created by Nick Anderson in 1999. It shows one cartoonist's viewpoint of the effect of a rapidly expanding population on the natural environment.



PROJECT Checklist

Have I . . .

- ✓ fully researched my topic?
- ✓ created informative, colorful visuals that make my report clear and interesting?
- ✓ used charts and graphs to tell a story about population issues in East Asia?
- ✓ practiced explaining my report?
- ✓ anticipated questions others might ask and prepared answers?